

The Struggle for Women's Suffrage Commences in Clatsop County in 1874

Equal Rights Association

From the Weekly Astorian May 21, 1874  
EDITOR ASTORIAN:

On the 1st inst. a meeting of the friends of Woman Suffrage was held at the Courthouse in this place, at which Col. Taylor was elected chairman, and Mrs. W. W. Parker secretary, and a committee was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws, to be submitted on the 8th. The committee at this time reported a constitution and by-laws, which were adopted with slight amendments. The first and second articles are as follows:

Article 1. This Society shall be known as the Clatsop County Equal Rights Association.

Article 2. The object of this Association is to secure to women the same political rights enjoyed by men.

After the adoption of the constitution the organization of the Society was completed by the election of the following named officers: President, Col. James Taylor; Vice President, Miss H. M. Morrison; Secretary, Mrs. A. W. Tenney; Treasurer, T. P. Powers, esq.; Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Mary Shane Smith.

Addresses favorable to Woman Suffrage were made by Messrs. T. P. Powers, W. H. Smith, D. Ingalls, Charles Stevens, E. C. Holden, Col. James Taylor, and Mrs. M. S. Smith.

Col. Spedden spoke in opposition to unqualified Woman Suffrage, because he thought woman too pure and angelic to "rush into the filthy cess pool of politics," feared "they would be contaminated by association with the men they would meet at the polls," etc., but thought it might perhaps be admiss-

able to allow women to vote on certain moral questions, and gradually the way might be prepared for her safe admission to all the rights of American citizens.

He was answered by Mr. Holden in a brief but stirring and pungent manner. He said the efforts of the ladies in the temperance cause, here and elsewhere, had satisfied him that woman's effective, substantial influence at the ballot-box, is needed, and must be had, if the evils and miseries caused by intemperance are ever to be lessened or abolished. He was in favor of enfranchising woman: because it is their natural, inalienable, right--and because the country requires their assistance to save it from destruction.

Mr. Powers endorsed the movement heartily, though he had not hitherto considered it expedient. He had always believed women had the right to vote, and that they were in every respect as capable as men, but he had not until recently felt it to be expedient. He said he could find nothing in the Bible denying to woman any natural right granted to man, and he felt that woman's influence would be in politics as elsewhere--good and efficient. He wished it understood that in identifying himself with this movement he felt no sympathy with Mrs. Woodhull and her school of fanatical free-lovers.

He was assured by a lady that women suffragists considered themselves no more responsible for Mrs. Woodhull's abominable depravity, than did individual Republicans or Democrats for the wickedness of Boss Tweed and others. She referred to Colonel Spedden's

women

ual Republicans or Democrats for the wickedness of Boss Tweed and others. She referred to Colonel Spedden's remarks and inquired if the ladies he spoke of as too pure and angelic to mingle with men at the polls, had any fathers, brothers, husbands or sons, and if so, if these men are all models of propriety. If they were not, how did women preserve their superiority of heart and soul when compelled to associate constantly with them. She thought if they endured this strain successfully, they surely would not lose all lovely, womanly attributes by going quietly to the polls and deposition a ballot.

Col. Taylor expressed his gratification at the progress of the cause he had so long advocated, and insisted that all side issues should be ignored--that women suffrage should be judged on its own merits, and should not be held responsible for any ultra or peculiar views expressed by any individuals supporting it.

Mr. Ingalls said he had long been in favor of giving women equal rights with men, and was pleased to see the movement now going on to secure them.

Mr. Stevens spoke warmly in favor of the object of the society, and felt

that women's influence was imperatively demanded to correct the shameful and debasing condition of politics, and realized that the influence could only be fully exerted through the ballot.

Mr. W. H. Smith said he thought it a shame that women should have to ask for the means of protection, and that it was pusillanimous for anyman to think of refusing it, on any ground. He said he did not think a single reason could be given why women should not vote, and every reason in favor of it was unanswerable. He was heart and soul with suffragists and hoped soon to see the cause succeed.

Mrs. Sarah E. Warren and Miss H. M. Morrison were appointed a committee to secure signatures to the Constitution in this vicinity.

The following names were given in during the meeting: Mrs. W. W. Parker, Mary Shane Smith, Sarah E. Warren, Miss H. M. Morrison, Col. James Taylor, W. H. Smith, T. P. Powers, W. W. Parker, Chas. Stevens, E. C. Holden, David Ingalls, Wm. McCrea.

Society adjourned to meet the first Friday in June.

Mrs. W. W. Parker, Secretary.  
Mary S. Smith, Cor. Secretary.